

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 10336 01 OF 02 121509Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 DODE-00
CIAE-00 /026 W

-----080898 121511Z /45

O 121230Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4853

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 10336

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR PARA THREE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PEPR, MILL, SY, IS, LE

SUBJECT: ISRAELI LEADERSHIP VIEW OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS

REF: (A) DAMASCUS 4600, (B) TEL AVIV 10332

1. DURING MY MEETING WITH WEIZMAN ON AUGUST 11 AND AFTER
OUR DISCUSSION ON THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS IN BOTH SOUTH LEBANON
AND IN BEIRUT (REF B), I BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT OF THE
ISRAELI LEADERSHIP VIEW OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS IN LEBANON.
DRAWING UPON REF A, I SAID THAT WE DO NOT
BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE SYRIAN INTENTION TO DESTROY THE
CHRISTIAN MINORITY IN LEBANON AND REMINDED HIM THAT THE ORIGINAL
SYRIAN PURPOSE OF ENTERING LEBANON IN 1976 HAD BEEN TO
HELP THE MARONITES. WEIZMAN QUIPPED THAT IN

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEL AV 10336 01 OF 02 121509Z

THE "ERA OF THE SECOND TEMPLE, THE ISRAELIS HAD ASKED THE
ROMANS IN." I THEN ASKED DMI GAZIT TO GIVE US HIS
JUDGMENT OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS.

2. GAZIT BEGAN BY STATING THE OBVIOUS - THE SITUATION IS
VERY COMPLICATED AND IS NEITHER BLACK NOR WHITE. HE SAID
THAT THE SYRIANS ARE KEEN ON DESTROYING THE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

OF THE PHALANGISTS AND THE NATIONAL LIBERALS (CHAMOUNISTS). HE SAID THAT THEY ARE ALSO KEEN ON ELIMINATING ANY POSSIBLE CHRISTIAN ARMED RESISTENCE. ACCORDING TO GAZIT, THE SYRIAN ATTITUDE IS THEREFORE THAT IF A GREAT PART OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY MUST BE DESTROYED OR MADE REFUGEES TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES, SO BE IT. HE SAID THAT WHEN THE SYRIANS HAD PUT DOWN THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE IN 1976, THERE HAD BEEN ONE MAJOR DIFFERENCE WITH THE PRESENT SITUATION - THE SYRIANS HAD AVOIDED COMBAT IN URBAN AREAS AND HAD CONCENTRATED ON PALESTINIAN STRONGHOLDS OCCUPIED BY FIGHTERS. IN BEIRUT TODAY, THE SYRIANS ARE ENGAGED IN URBAN WARFARE AND AN AREA WHICH PREVIOUSLY HAD 200,000 INHABITANTS NOW HAS ONLY ABOUT 25,000.

3. I THEN SAID THAT IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THE SYRIANS NOT BE PUT IN A POSITION WHERE THEY MIGHT MISJUDGE ISRAELI INTENTIONS. I TOLD WEIZMAN THAT IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE BEEN "HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO THE RISKS OF WAR WITH ISRAEL AND HAVE ACTED ACCORDINGLY" (REF A). I SAID THAT AT PRESENT WE CAN DISCERN NO CHANGE IN THEIR DESIRE TO AVOID CONFRONTATION, ON THE OTHER HAND, ISRAEL CANNOT OPERATE ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IT CAN TAKE MILITARY ACTION AT WILL IN LEBANON WITHOUT RISKING WAR WITH SYRIA. I EXPLAINED THAT THERE COULD BE A POINT AT WHICH SYRIA COULD NO LONGER SWALLOW A CHALLENGE AND MIGHT FIND DEFEAT MORE ACCEPTABLE THAN HUMILIATION.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 TEL AV 10336 01 OF 02 121509Z

4. WEIZMAN THEN SAID THAT THIS WAS A VERY INTERESTING EXCHANGE, BUT THAT HE SHOULD POINT OUT SOMETHING ABOUT THE CONTINUING PROBLEM OF THE PALESTINIAN THREAT FROM LEBANON. FROM TIME TO TIME, THE IDF WOULD HAVE TO STRIKE AT PALESTINIAN BASES PRE-EMPTIVELY SO LONG AS TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST ISRAEL CONTINUE. HE SAID THAT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT THIS REQUIREMENT EXISTED BUT THAT ISRAEL COULD NOT CONTINUALLY OPERATE IN THE RESPONSE MODE. HE WENT ON TO SAY, "THE IDF HAS A LIST OF TARGETS," AND, POINTING AT EITAN, "MY CHIEF OF STAFF WANTS TO GO". CONTINUING, HE SAID, "WE WILL NOT NECESSARILY OBSERVE ANY UNWRITTEN LAW THAT WE ONLY REACT - TWO MONTHS AGO WE ACTED IN RESPONSE TO HARD INTELLIGENCE ABOUT ANOTHER IMMINENT TERRORIST ATTACK BY SEA AND WE RAIDED ON THE COAST - WE SHALL DO SO IN THE FUTURE IF WE FEEL IT IS NECESSARY."

5. WEIZMAN THEN IMMEDIATELY SAID THAT NEITHER HE NOR ANYONE ELSE WANTS A CLASH WITH THE SYRIANS, WHICH HE "VIEWS MORE SERIOUSLY THAN A CLASH WITH EGYPT - NOT THAT I WANT WAR WITH EITHER OF THEM." HE SAID THAT IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE OF TENSION AND TO CLARIFY THE INTENTIONS OF BOTH SIDES, SOMETHING CONCRETE IS NEEDED TO DAMPEN THE SITUATION. AS FAR AS ISRAEL IS CONCERNED, A CONCRETE MOVE WOULD BE FOR THE SYRIANS

TO PACK UP AND LEAVE LEBANON. AS LONG AS THEY STAY, ISREL
WILL ALWAYS QUESTION THIER INTENTION - "IS IT THAT THEY WANT
TO STAY IN LEBANON - TO CREATE A GREATER SYRIA - TO ESTABLISH
ANOTHER CONFRONTATION FRONT WITH ISRAEL, OR IS IT REALLY AN
UNFORTUNATE SITUATION THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE GOOTEN THEMSELVES
INTO AND REALLY WANT TO GET OUT OF BUT HAVEN'T YET BEEN ABLE TO
FIND A HONORABLE WAY?" I SAID THT I BELIEVED THAT THE

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 10336 02 OF 02 121336Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----079578 121341Z /45

O 121230Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4854
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 10336

EXDIS

SYRIANS WANT TO HAVE A SITUATION HEREBY LEBANON IS POLITICALLY
AMENABLE TO SYRIAN INTERESTS AND NOTHING WILL HAPPEN IN
LEBANON TO THREATEN THOSE INTERESTS. TWO YEARS AGO OR MORE
THE SYRIANS HAD FEARED A SPILLOVER OF LEBANESE INTERNAL STRIFE
INTO SYRIA AND THUS HAD DECIDED THEY MUST REACT BY MOVING
REGULAR MILITARY FORCES INTO LEBANON TO RESTORE SOME MEASURE
OF ORDER. I TOLD HIM I ALSO BELIEVED THAT IF THE SYRIANS
COULD FIND A WAY TO PULL OUT, LEAVING BEHIND A CONGENIAL
POLITICAL SITUATION, THEY WOULD DO IT BECAUSE THEY FEEL MILITARILY
WEAKENED VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL AS A RESULT OF THEIR HEAVEY
COMMITMENT OF TROOPS IN LEBANON. I CAUTIONED AGAINST ANTICIPATING
ANY PULL-OUT IN THE NEAR FUTURE, UT SAID THAT THE
LATEST MOVES TOWARD SOME SEPARATION OF FORCES IN BEIRUT WERE
ENCOURAGING.

6. COMMENT: I DON'T THINK I DENTED WEIZMAN'S CONCERNS ABOUT

SYRIAN INTENTIONS. I AM NOT EVEN VERY SURE THAT WEIZMAN
HIMSELF BELIEVES IN A SYRIAN PLOT TO TAKE OVER LEBANON, THOUGH
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEL AV 10336 02 OF 02 121336Z

MANY OTHER ISRAELIS CERTAINLY DO. IN ANY EVENT, ZIPPORI,
EITAN AND GAZIT HAVE ALL NOW HEARD OUR PRESENTATION AND
OUR BELIEF THAT NO SIGNALS SHOULD BE SENT BY ISRAEL WHICH
MIGHT PUSH DAMASCUS TOO FAR. I CANNOT HELP BUT FEEL, HOWEVER,
THAT IF THE CEASEFIRE FAILS AND THE CHRISTIAN SECTION
OF BEIRUT AGAIN RECEIVES HEAVY INCOMING FIRE FROM SYRIAN
ARTILLERY, REGARDLESS OF WHO STARTS THE FIRING, WE CAN EXPECT
INCREASED ISRAELI SABER-RATTLING AND SONIC BOOMS - AS WELL
AS PRIVATE URGINGS THAT THE U.S. FIND SOME WAY TO GETTING
THE SYRIANS OUT OF LEBANON - AND, IF THESE DON'T WORK, PROBABLY
SOMETHING MORE.

LEWIS

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHRISTIANS, ARMED FORCES, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MILITARY PLANS, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV10336
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780343-0459, D780330-0432
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780869/aaaacfun.tel
Line Count: 190
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 61050e64-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 DAMASCUS 4600, 78 TEL AVIV 10332
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1754524
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ISRAELI LEADERSHIP VIEW OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS
TAGS: PEPR, MILI, SY, IS, LE, (WEIZMAN, EZER)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/61050e64-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014